

HOW TO...

Create a hand-made effect

Polished effects such as cutouts and textures can look swish, but making text look hand-drawn can be just as effective. Adam Banks explains how to rough things up

You can do some pretty cool things to text using creative effects, such as letterpress printing, 3D textures and metallic surfaces. Sometimes, though, instead of adding richness and polish to artwork, you may want it to look hand-made or rough-and-ready. This can be surprisingly hard, because software doesn't facilitate the sort of inaccuracy and sloppiness that come naturally when you write or draw using real-life tools.

To simulate hand-drawn lettering on a PC, you should use a 'natural media' painting program rather than an image editor. For this tutorial we've used ArtRage 2.2, which won our Budget Buy award in our Labs round-up of painting software in *Shopper* October 2007.

Natural media programs typically have meagre text options, and ArtRage is no exception; in fact, it has no text tool at all. To get around this, we'll import an image as a stencil. Stencils are simple graphics that you can 'pin' to your canvas and then paint through. Like real stencils, they mask off areas where your paint won't go.

Here we've used Photoshop Elements 5 to create the text, although almost any image-editing package will do. Then we'll show you how to make it look hand-drawn in ArtRage.

1 Run your image-editing program and make a new canvas (usually by pressing Ctrl-N) that's at least as large as you want your finished artwork to be. Using the text tool, enter your text and format it as you want it. To ensure your

stencil has sharp, crisp edges, make the text solid black and as large as possible. When it's ready, flatten the image to remove any layers. To do this in Photoshop Elements, choose Flatten Image from the Layers menu. Save the image as a .PNG file, ArtRage's preferred format. If your software doesn't support this, try GIF. Alternatively, you can use the same text shown here. The .PNG file is on this month's cover disc.

2 Run ArtRage and press Ctrl-N to set up a new painting. On the settings screen that appears, choose the size you want for your artwork and pick a paper texture if you want one. Click OK to return to ArtRage's main screen.

Now click on the Stencils icon in the Toolbox Panel at the bottom to show the Stencils Picker. Drag the scroll bar down to reveal the Add New Stencil option, and click on it. Select the lettering file you just created. Your lettering image is added to the palette as a stencil.

3 Click your stencil to place it on the blank canvas. You can now close the Stencil Picker by clicking on the cross in its top right-hand corner. To position the stencil, click on the first icon in the Toolbox Panel or press M. By default this tool moves the canvas around, but if you move the mouse pointer on to the stencil the cursor symbol gets smaller, indicating that you can now use it to adjust the stencil.

Using the right mouse button, click and drag to reposition the stencil. Hold down the Alt key to resize it, or Ctrl to rotate it.

4 From the Tool Picker at the bottom left, choose the Chalk tool (just below the Brush). In the Tool Settings panel (centre left), set Pressure to 33%. At the bottom right, choose a colour by picking a hue from the spectrum and dragging the vertical slider to make it lighter or darker. Now click and drag with the mouse – or your graphics tablet, if you have one – to chalk over the lettering on the stencil. Do this quickly and roughly so that it isn't too neat.

5 To check your work, right-click on the stencil and choose Hide Stencil. If you want your lettering to look rougher, choose the Palette Knife tool. Again, set Pressure to about 33% and drag over your lettering to smudge it.

6 ArtRage's Stencils can work in different ways. Using the Ruler mode, you can simulate drawing around a stencil with a pen or pencil, as you'd do with a lettering stencil. Starting with your stencil on a blank canvas (you can press Undo, Ctrl-Z, repeatedly to get back to this point), right-click the stencil and switch from Stencil Mode to Ruler Mode.

Choose the Pencil tool. Click in the lettering on the stencil and drag. The line you draw will cling to the edge of the lettering as if you were pushing your pencil against the stencil. It may take a few minutes to get the hang of this, but don't worry if you keep going slightly wrong, as it adds to the realism of the stencilling effect. Try this with a chunky font, ideally one with stencil breaks, such as Cargo or Stencil. 



FINAL IMAGE

